

THE ARMY ACQUISITION CAREER MANAGEMENT OFFICE

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Introduction

On April 1, 1996, Gilbert F. Decker, then Assistant Secretary of the Army for Research, Development and Acquisition, and Sara E. Lister, then Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, jointly signed a policy memorandum entitled *Career Development as a Mission*. This memorandum ultimately led to support for the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) and the Army's continued recognition that education, training, and career development of the acquisition workforce members is paramount to effectively equipping the warfighter. Although Gilbert Decker and Sara Lister are no longer with HQDA, the goals they established for the Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) are still supported by the AAC leadership. The programs, processes, and policies established to support education, training, and career development have kept pace with the demands of the AAC and the Acquisition and Technology Workforce (A&TWF).

Mission

The Acquisition Career Management Office (ACMO) assists the Director, Acquisition Career Management (DACM) and the Deputy DACM (DDACM) by serving as the Army's single point of contact on all matters pertaining to the implementation of DAWIA. In this capacity, the ACMO has the primary mission of establishing Army policies and procedures

regarding all aspects of DAWIA and ensuring they are implemented throughout the A&TWF. This mission encompasses many responsibilities, one of which is a major effort to ensure that the Army's A&TWF has the proper education, training, and experience to provide soldiers the systems critical to decisive victory now and in the future through development, integration, acquisition, fielding, and sustainment.

As COL John A. Como, Chief of Staff to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (ASAALT), recently stated, "We are part of an Army that is strategically responsive and dominant at every point on the spectrum of operations. The Army's acquisition, logistics, and technology programs are critically connected to the Army Chief of Staff's vision to transform the Army in the 21st century."

The ACMO identifies and defines the acquisition education, training and experience (AETE) requirements for the A&TWF; develops high-quality education, training, and experience opportunities; and provides for the overall career development of military and civilian workforce members. The ACMO also develops and implements programs and processes directed by the DACM in support of the ASAALT and the Army Acquisition Executive. The ACMO is also responsible for overseeing AAC membership, workforce certification, and continuous learning; representing the Army on cog-

nizant functional integrated product teams, rapid improvement teams, and workgroups; and identifying and defending funding requirements to support the overall AAC/ACMO mission and AETE programs.

In the past, the composition and size of DOD's acquisition workforce was controversial. Consequently, various definitions were used to identify the workforce, but there was no real consensus by the individual Services or the Office of the Secretary of Defense on what actually constituted the acquisition workforce.

In response to congressional concerns of a lack of uniformity, and in an effort to resolve this issue, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology contracted Jefferson Solutions in May 1997 to develop a methodology for defining the various elements of the workforce. Subsequently, a recommendation was made to identify the workforce using an updated and modified version of an approach developed by the 1986 President's Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management (the Packard Commission). The methodology builds on the Packard Commission model that uses occupational and organizational data. From December 1997 through March 1998, numerous modifications were made to the model. Any functions that could potentially impact the acquisition life-cycle process were examined to identify which occupational areas and organizations to include in calculating the size of

the workforce. An initial and secondary sizing calculation provided the working group an opportunity to refine both the occupational and organizational lists used in the workforce identification model. The refined algorithms count only key military and civilian A&TWF members, not clerical or support personnel.

On May 13, 1999, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics (USD(AT&L)) approved the refined Packard definition as the official identification method for the A&TWF. Using USD(AT&L) guidance provided on April 6, 2001, the Army is now in the process of assimilating the newly identified personnel into the workforce.

Policy

The ACMO is responsible for developing and implementing all policy and procedures affecting the A&TWF. As such, the ACMO issued Department of the Army policies for acquisition career field (ACF) certification (for individuals seeking Army certification in an ACF), Corps Eligible membership, continuous learning, AETE, and the Acquisition Tuition Assistance Program.

The AAC is a group of specially trained military and civilian acquisition professionals within the A&TWF. To become an AAC member, military and civilian personnel at all levels must meet requirements established by DAWIA, DOD, and the Army. Information regarding AAC membership and requirements and other important policies and procedures are located on the AAC home page at <http://dacm.rdaisa.army.mil>.

Processes

The DACM manages and documents all acquisition positions and has established an acquisition position list process to enable acquisition organizations to identify civilian and military position requirements including Active, Reserve, National

Guard, and Army Medical Department components.

An effort has been initiated to identify acquisition branch qualification (ABQ) positions so that Army acquisition professionals can acquire the cross-functional skills needed for critical acquisition positions (CAPs). The ABQ concept enables A&TWF professionals to identify those positions that provide the experience necessary to allow them to become more competitive for assignment to CAPs. For military personnel, these positions are considered equivalent to that of battalion executive officer/S3, and successful performance in a branch-qualified position enhances an applicant's file for selection boards. For civilians, ABQ positions illustrate their functional competencies and performance in key leadership roles. The ABQ process supports the Acquisition Career Development Plan (ACDP) and should be documented in the individual development plan (IDP).

The ACDP was developed in the fall of 1999 to help create a career progression map that guides A&TWF members from a functional expertise level to the competency level required for key leadership positions. The ACDP provides workforce members with the tools necessary to achieve success at all levels. The plan consists of four processes that present a framework for individuals to identify and define their career goals and successfully implement a plan to achieve them. Army workforce members benefit from the ACDP by having a framework to develop a viable career path.

An established DACM policy requires all acquisition personnel to develop and maintain an IDP. The IDP is a planning tool used to outline an individual's specific goals and achievements for the next 1 to 5 years. It is also used as a tracking mechanism for continuous learning activities and earned points. A Web-based IDP was created in September 1998 to aid formal career development of acquisition professionals.

Regional Support

The ACMO is responsible for the oversight and management of those customer support offices (CSOs) throughout the United States that have a high concentration of A&TWF members. Five years ago, the regional support structure was in its infancy—today, CSOs are a reality. They are integral to a successful regional strategy to provide A&TWF members with career development tools, individual assistance, and timely information needed to successfully manage their careers. Each CSO has a regional director who is responsible for overseeing the career development of the region's A&TWF education and training; assisting in the development of policy, procedures, and programs for the management of the A&TWF; and ensuring regional acquisition management requirements are identified and addressed. (Refer to the article titled *Regional Customer Support Offices* on Page 11, which highlights each regional office.)

Ongoing Initiatives

The customer support strategy outlined by the DDACM in 1996 established customer field support elements at selected sites throughout the country. This field support allows the AAC and A&TWF to implement the AAC vision to develop "A Corps of Leaders Willing to Serve Where Needed and Committed to Providing Soldiers the Systems Critical to Decisive Victory Now and in the Future through Development, Integration, Acquisition, Fielding, and Sustainment." Since 1996, the ACMO's focus has evolved from initial revitalization efforts to well-established programs and new initiatives.

The Competitive Development Group (CDG) Program graduated its first class in August 2000. Now in its fourth year, the CDG Program is jointly supported by the ACMO and the U.S. Total Army Personnel Command's (PERSCOM's) Acquisition Management Branch (AMB). This exceptional program provides enhanced education, training, and

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experiential opportunities. (To learn more about the CDG Program, see the article on Page 29.)

The Acquisition Career Experience (ACE) Program is another new initiative that supports the ACMO's mission and cultivates the next generation of acquisition professionals. The ACE Program recruits college students in their sophomore or junior year to work during the summer in A&TWF positions. "It's a win-win situation for everyone," says Kelly L. Terry, Northeast Regional Director for Acquisition Career Management. "The students gain real work experience while getting paid, and the Army gets superior candidates for the acquisition intern program and potential future top managers." This program has been very popular since its inception in 1998 and is expanding to more colleges and universities.

Because of the influx of new people into the A&TWF, the demand for training and education opportunities will continue to grow. This has necessitated that the ACMO develop unique programs and methods of instruction and delivery to support the workforce. The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), in conjunction with the ACMO, has developed courses designed to accommodate the needs of acquisition professionals. In 1999, a Master of Science in Program Management (MSPM 836) graduate degree program was piloted through the NPS Distance Learning Program. The advantages of this program are

that students are not required to leave their duty stations, and courses may be completed during both duty and nonduty hours. MSPM 836 and other programs such as the recently added Master of Science in Contract Management (MSCM 835) Program will continue to accommodate today's workforce requirements.

In 1999, 15 Army commands, program executive offices, and various agencies implemented the DOD Civilian Acquisition Workforce Personnel Demonstration Project (AcqDemo). The ACMO is responsible for AcqDemo implementation for Army activities and, initially, served as the lead organization. These 15 AcqDemo activities join the 4 Army Science and Technology Laboratory Personnel Demonstration Projects in experiencing new and different personnel management concepts. The lessons learned from these experiences will determine whether changes in personnel policy or procedures would result in improved federal personnel management. All of these projects involve broadbanding, simplified job classification, streamlined hiring processes, a performance or contribution-based compensation and appraisal system, expanded training opportunities, sabbaticals, a voluntary emeritus program, and revised reduction-in-force procedures.

Currently, more than 7,800 employees participate in these personnel demonstration projects. The

goal of these projects is to enhance the quality, professionalism, and management of the acquisition workforce through improvements in the human resources management system.

Conclusion

The ACMO, together with its partners at the Army Acquisition Executive Support Agency; PERSCOM's AMB; and the Army Research, Development and Acquisition Information Systems Activity (RDAISA); strives to support the career management process of the AAC and the A&TWF. As such, the ACMO is committed to ensuring that the A&TWF is offered opportunities that promote the achievement and maintenance of a technical competence and leadership capability that is second to none.

Just as the Army is transforming itself into a more responsive, agile, and versatile force to meet future mission needs, so too must the A&TWF broaden itself to meet a rapidly changing acquisition environment. Ultimately, the ACMO's goal is to continue to provide the best education and career development opportunities available to its acquisition professionals so the soldier in the field is successfully equipped for decisive victory.

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